Ontario

FINDING COMMON GROUND:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS, K–12

November 2007

Ontario

FINDING COMMON GROUND:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS, K–12

November 2007

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Vers des points communs : le développement du caractère dans les écoles de l'Ontario (de la maternelle à la 12e année)*.

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education website at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca

A Message from the Deputy Minister of Education, Philip Steenkamp

November 1, 2007

Today's students are exposed to many competing influences and values during their formative years. This is why Ontario's publicly-funded education system is ensuring that there is a deliberate focus on universal attributes that communities share such as respect, fairness, honesty and responsibility.

This school year, the Ministry of Education is expecting all Ontario boards and schools to implement a character development program based on a process of community consultation and student engagement. This process will invite all Ontarians to share the responsibility and assume ownership for the success of the initiative. Its implementation will contribute to improved student achievement and increased confidence in Ontario's publicly-funded education system.

The participants at the regional character development forums held across Ontario this past spring enthusiastically supported an approach to character development that combines a strong academic program with citizenship development and respect for diversity. Their input has been incorporated into this document, *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12*, which will serve as the framework for board and school implementation plans and processes.

The commitment to excellence in education that exists in Ontario schools and communities provides a solid foundation for the inclusion of character development in the mandate of publicly-funded education.

We are counting on you to ensure that all Ontario students experience the best possible education – one that incorporates character development in the culture of schools and in all programs and practices.

Philip Steenkamp

Philip Steenkamp

A Call to Action

It is a pleasure to introduce the document *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12*. This document reflects the collaboration of three departments of the Ministry of Education with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat leading the initiative.

It is important to acknowledge the many schools and boards that already have character development programs. We congratulate them and urge them to take their existing programs to new levels of effectiveness. Their experience and expertise will be invaluable as we build capacity in other school boards so that character development becomes a reality in all Ontario schools.

Consultations were held across the province in the spring of 2007 with the primary purpose of gathering input on the October 2006 discussion paper on character development. This document has now been revised to reflect the perspectives gathered during these consultations.

This initiative is coming at the right time in education in Ontario. There is a sense of optimism for the future of education in the province. Students are improving in their learning and achievement. Character development will make our vision of education truly balanced and holistic as we revisit the foundations of public education – namely, intellectual, character and citizenship development.

This is the time for us to reaffirm our commitment to the potential of our publicly-funded school system to deliver on its promise to educate all students successfully. But it must be recognized that a quality education includes the education of the heart as well as the mind. It includes a focus on the whole person. It means preparing students to be citizens who have empathy and respect for others within our increasingly diverse communities. It also means providing opportunities for students to understand deeply the importance of civic engagement and what it means to be productive citizens in an interdependent world.

Character development is education at its best.

We invite all Ontarians to make character development a foundation of our education system. Our students deserve no less.

Avis E. Glaze
Chief Student Achievement Officer, and CEO, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

George Zegarac
Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Planning and Elementary/ Secondary Programs Division

Dominic Giroux
Assistant Deputy Minister French Language Education Educational Operations Division

Table of Contents

What Is Character Development? 2

Character Development in Ontario Schools 3

Key Beliefs and Principles 4

Key Expectations 6

Finding Common Ground:
Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12 7

- Engaging Our Students, Our Schools and Our Communities 7
- Character Development: A Shared Responsibility 8
- Education at Its Best 9

Finding Common Ground: The Essential Components 11

- Academic Achievement 13
- Character Development 14
- Citizenship Development 19
- Respect for Diversity 21

Finding Common Ground: Parent and Community Partnerships 22

Implementing Character Development 23

- Curriculum Connections 23

Ministry of Education: Implementation Support 24

Ministry of Education: Key Actions to Date 25

Roles and Responsibilities 26

References 29

What Is Character Development?

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable. They bind us together across socio-economic, racial, religious, cultural, gender and other lines that often divide people and communities. They form the basis for our relationships. They are a foundation for excellence in education and for our vision of strong, caring and interdependent communities.

Through character, we find common ground.

Key Messages:

- Character development is about excellence in education, communities that are vibrant and caring, and students who will think critically, feel deeply and act wisely.
- A quality education is about more than academic achievement – it is about the development of the whole person.
- Parents and families have a primary responsibility for the development of their children's character, with the support of their school and community.
- Student engagement is essential to all character development processes.
- Ontario teachers and all education workers play a pivotal role in the success of character development in our schools.
- Character development must be a whole-school effort. All members of the school community share the responsibility to model, teach and expect demonstrations of the universal attributes in all school, classroom and extracurricular activities.

Ontario's character development initiative reflects the diversity of our province and the importance of equitable and inclusive schools in which all students feel a sense of belonging. Our focus on equity of outcome, requires high expectations for all students in academic achievement and character development.

Character Development in Ontario Schools

Ontario's vision of character development must be clearly articulated to ensure that there are common understandings of the key beliefs, principles, processes and expectations.

The following statements provide an overview of what character development is – and what it is not.

Character development in Ontario schools ...

✔ is about all members of the community sharing the responsibility for supporting students and families in the development of character	✘ is not about schools taking over the responsibility of parents and families
✔ is about critical and analytical thinking, questioning, anticipating problems and contributing to solutions	✘ is not about compliance
✔ is about self-management, self-discipline and the development of interpersonal competencies	✘ is not about behaviour based on a fear of punishment
✔ is about self-awareness, reflection and understanding – doing what's right because it's the right thing to do	✘ is not about behaviours motivated by extrinsic rewards and recognition
✔ is about the development of standards of behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable	✘ does not seek to indoctrinate
✔ must include the active involvement and engagement of students	✘ cannot be done to students
✔ is a process that develops character in a deliberate and intentional manner through interactions with others and engagement in the wider community	✘ is not found in a textbook, binder or manual
✔ is embedded in all aspects of school life – in its policies, programs, practices, procedures, processes and interactions	✘ is not a new curriculum or an add-on
✔ is about inclusiveness and respect for diversity ✔ is about ensuring that there are opportunities to engage students in general, and disengaged and marginalized students in particular, in the initiative ✔ is about all students and all schools	✘ is not about the "few" or the exclusion of some
✔ is about the universal attributes upon which diverse communities find common ground, and transcends religious differences ✔ complements religious and family life education in Catholic schools	✘ is not a form of religious education
✔ is about a process of engagement in which communities come together to build consensus on the values they hold in common	✘ is not about a government imposing a set of moral standards

Key Beliefs and Principles

The following key beliefs and principles provide the framework for Ontario's Character Development Initiative. They are intended to guide the planning, implementation, and review processes of boards and schools.

A Commitment to Share Responsibility

1. Character development is a:
   - primary responsibility of parents and families
   - cornerstone of a civil, just and democratic society
   - foundation of our publicly funded education system.

2. Character development must be a whole-school effort. All members of the school community share the responsibility to model, teach and expect demonstrations of the universal attributes in all school, classroom and extracurricular activities.

3. Character development is not a new curriculum. It requires an integrated, cross-curricular approach to learning. It is in everything that we do in schools and is embedded into policies, programs, processes, practices and interactions.

A Commitment to Student Achievement and Engagement

4. Student engagement is essential in the character development process. The meaningful participation and involvement of students is central to the success of the initiative.

5. Character development supports academic achievement because it:
   - develops the whole student as an individual, as an engaged learner and as a citizen
   - addresses the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of learning
   - contributes to safe, healthy and orderly school environments that are prerequisites for learning
   - creates learning environments that are positive and collaborative so that teachers spend less time disciplining and more time doing what they do best – namely, teaching
   - sets high expectations for learning and behaviour and engages students in sharing the responsibility for their own learning.

6. Character development strives for an ever-growing depth of self-awareness, reflection and understanding. It is not about indoctrination. It is about the development of critical and analytical thinking. It is not about punishment. It is about developing self-discipline. Behavioural consequences are addressed through Codes of Conduct which are mandatory in all Ontario schools.

"Inclusivity is not an option; it is a moral choice that must be made and someone needs to lead the way. Our school has done that, and now we are in a good and peaceful place."

– Nicole Levesque
Chaplain, Ottawa Catholic School Board

A Commitment to Community Building and Diversity

7. Character development is about community development. Engaging the community in sharing the responsibility for character development is essential to the success of the initiative.

8. The increasing diversity of Ontario's population creates an opportunity for us to determine the beliefs and principles we hold in common. When school boards engage a wide cross-section of their communities in building consensus on character attributes, they are, in essence, engaged in a process of finding common ground.

9. The principles and attributes of character development are universal and transcend physical and intellectual ability, gender, racial, ethnocultural, linguistic and religious differences as well as other demographic factors. Empathy for others and respect for the dignity of all persons are essential characteristics of an inclusive society.

10. The character development initiative upholds and reinforces the tenets of constitutional rights, federal and provincial legislation, and the grounds outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

"Teaching good character is the responsibility of each and every member of our community. It is about recognizing and exemplifying positive character traits that both our children and we display. Children are our most valuable asset, they are our future. What we chose to invest in our children today is what our world of tomorrow will be."

– Elaine Pavloff Torde
Community member, York Region

Key Expectations

School boards are expected to demonstrate evidence of the following in their implementation of the character development initiative:

1. a collaborative board-based process to engage a diverse cross-section of the community in the development, implementation and review of the initiative
2. the selection of attributes through a board process of community consensus building
3. a board-wide and school-wide commitment to model, teach and expect demonstrations of these attributes in all school, classroom and extracurricular activities
4. student leadership development and expanded opportunities for student voice and engagement in the education process and in their communities
5. character development practices that are holistic in their approach and that reflect the academic, social and emotional, attitudinal, and behavioural domains of learning
6. board and school plans with a deliberate focus on character development and alignment with other ministry documents and expectations, for example: *Ontario First Nation, Metis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*; *Amenagement linguistique. A Policy for Ontario's French-Language Schools and Francophone Community*; *Choices into Action*; Safe Schools and Student Success initiatives
7. the infusion of character development into the policies, programs, practices, procedures and interactions in the board and schools
8. the collection of baseline and ongoing data regarding the impact of the initiative on areas such as:
   - student achievement
   - graduation rates
   - attendance
   - student leadership
   - student behaviour
   - student engagement in the learning process
   - school culture
   - student involvement in their communities.

"Over the years, character development has made a significant impact on our schools. We started by working with the community to determine what character development should look like. It was a truly inclusive process in which we involved our students, staff, parents and community. I believe that the support that we have for character development in York Region is a result of the strong community consultation process upon which our program was built. Community engagement certainly plays a pivotal role in the success of character development."

– Bill Hogarth
Director of Education,
York Region District School Board

Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12

ENGAGING OUR STUDENTS, OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR COMMUNITIES

Student success is the fundamental measure of an education system. It is the ultimate expression of respect for our students and professional accountability for their achievements. Student success, however, is multidimensional. In addition to academic success, studies indicate that Ontarians share a belief in the need to develop character and to prepare students for their role in society as engaged, productive and responsible participants.

Over the past three years, the government has introduced a series of initiatives designed to enhance academic achievement for all students in Ontario's publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools. Through the character development initiative, the government addresses a complementary and equally critical aspect of student success focused on developing the student as a learner, as an individual, as a citizen and as an active member of the school and broader community. The concept of character development is rooted in the belief that parents, schools and communities share the responsibility for, and the benefits of, the development of our young people as empathetic and involved citizens.

This K–12 initiative involves all members of the board, school and community in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that students require to become caring and socially responsible members of society. The initiative also affirms the importance of respect as a fundamental characteristic of relationships in Ontario schools.

Students are the centre of our school system. Consequently, they must be active participants in this process. Character development can neither be done to them nor can it be successful without them. The commitment of everyone in the school and community to engaging students in building school cultures characterized by positive attributes and responsible citizenship is essential to this initiative.

Character cannot be acquired passively, nor can it be delivered solely as units of curriculum.

Character must be developed through active participation and supported by dialogue, reflection and action. The character development initiative is grounded in the vision of an education system in which students play a pivotal role, and are actively engaged in their own learning, in the life of the school and in their communities.

Character development is about citizenship in action.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Our vision for the province of Ontario is one of excellence in academic achievement and the development of both character and the competencies of responsible citizenship. We are committed to *excellence* and *equity*. As the province strives to provide the best possible education for all students, there is a need to recommit ourselves to the central mission of schooling – to transmit from one generation to the next the habits of mind and heart that are necessary for good citizenship to thrive. To this end, the character development initiative, which goes hand in hand with a strong academic program, unifies and strengthens these efforts.

Developing character is a shared responsibility. There is a need for families and schools to work cooperatively to encourage students' learning and maturing as social beings. Students are at the centre of everything that we do. Family and school alliances are necessary to create a web of support for the continuous improvement of our schools.

Our citizens are our province's best asset. They contribute to nation building and to the continued development of a civil society. When schools address the qualities that contribute to the health and well-being of our society, they are, indeed, contributing to the improvement of the world that our students will inherit.

Character development, when fully implemented, permeates the entire life of the school. It is woven into policies, programs, practices, procedures, processes and interactions. It is a way of life. It recognizes that a respectful, safe and orderly school climate enhances learning.

Schools cannot do this alone. Everyone who works or volunteers in our schools or has a vested interest in the quality of our education system and in the calibre of our graduates has a part to play in the success of character development initiatives. For that reason, we call upon all partners in education – students, teachers, principals, supervisory officers, parents, guardians, secretaries, custodians, school council members, bus drivers, trustees, business and community leaders, members of social service agencies and faith communities to join with us in nurturing the best of the human and universal qualities that our graduates need to be successful in our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

We believe in the potential of our students to be responsible members of our communities and in their ability to demonstrate the universal values that we espouse as a society. We want our schools to continue to be safe models of effective relationships where students learn about and put into practice attributes such as respect, responsibility, fairness and empathy. We want students to develop self-discipline and the personal management skills that will make their communities and workplaces the best that they can be.

Together we can make this happen.

EDUCATION AT ITS BEST

A quality education is not only geared towards the intellect, but also towards attitudes, behaviours, dispositions and sensibilities. It emphasizes all aspects of the self and domains of learning – the cognitive, affective, attitudinal and behavioural. It is about the education of the whole person. Character development, which encompasses all these domains, is a fundamental goal of education in Ontario.

In the 2003 Speech from the Throne, the government committed to engaging school boards and their communities in establishing character education programs designed to strengthen and enhance their students' educational experience. As well, in June 2006, the following resolution was adopted by all three parties of the Legislature:

> *"That, in the opinion of this House, the Government of Ontario should declare the Province of Ontario to be a Province of Character by encouraging the citizens of Ontario to foster a climate which promotes, supports and celebrates excellence in character in its schools, businesses, homes and community-based organizations in order to strengthen Ontario's families and communities."*

The importance of such an initiative is supported by the majority of Ontarians who, in a 2005 Ipsos Reid study, agreed that "kids today don't learn the basics of character development."

Many studies, such as *The Schools We Need* (2003), highlight the importance parents place on character development while building strong foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and critical thinking. According to this study, one of the highest priorities for parents is for schools to help students develop as responsible citizens and to learn how to make ethical decisions.

Another Ontario research study reinforces the finding that, indeed, parents are concerned about the character development of their children. In the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Mary Ann Evans and her colleagues at the University of Guelph reported on their comprehensive 2004 study, *Beginning Reading: The Views of Parents and Teachers of Young Children*, in which parents who were representative of the demographics of south western Ontario were surveyed. Parents were presented with nine domains of learning and asked to rate the importance of each in preparing their children for the future. Parents consistently rated character development as a high priority.

Preparing students for the workplace is also an important goal of education. The *Ontario Skills Passport* (OSP 2007), based on extensive research and consultation by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and Ontario's Ministry of Education, identifies Essential Skills and important work habits that are used in virtually all occupations. Inherent in these are characteristics such as reliability, responsibility, integrity, initiative and respect. This is reinforced by the perspectives of Canadian employers in the *Employability Skills Profile* by the Conference Board of Canada (2000). It states that personal management skills such as honesty, adaptability and respect for diversity are essential for students entering the workplace.

Daniel Goleman's research on *Emotional Intelligence* (1996), and *Social Intelligence* (2006) states that Emotional Quotient (EQ) is more important than Intelligence Quotient (IQ) in determining success in school and in life. His writing emphasizes the importance of social and emotional literacy, which he describes as the ability to identify, manage and express one's emotions in a mature and conscientious manner. These literacies improve students' academic achievement and overall school performance. Canadian studies (Parker 2003; Parker et al., 2004) support these research findings.

The *Early School Leavers* report (2005), based on the voices of Ontario youth, identifies the primary protective factors for keeping students successfully engaged in school as "forms of alternative schooling, caring teachers, self-determination and insight". The three key recommendations from the report are to, "be more understanding, be more flexible, and be more proactive in reaching out to youth, families and communities". Dr. Bruce Ferguson, co-author of the report, summarizes this in his advice to teachers: "Just care."

Howard Gardner (1999), another seminal researcher in the field of education, developed the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligences are two of the eight "intelligences" that he identifies as contributing to effective learning and life functioning.

These researchers agree that characteristics such as respect and empathy form the basis of interpersonal understanding and effective relationships.

"Mounting research shows that students who feel connected to school – to teachers, to other students, to the school itself – do better academically."

– Daniel Goleman (2006)

Finding Common Ground: The Essential Components

The character development initiative recognizes that **academic achievement**, **character development**, **citizenship development** and **respect for diversity** are inextricably linked and must be interwoven into students' educational experiences. It provides students with tools for increasing academic achievement, building a solid foundation for thoughtful decision-making and creating more opportunities to use their skills to influence positive outcomes.

School communities must value differences in learning styles, student ways of knowing, and the contributions of all members of their learning community. This ensures the success of every student, regardless of ability, special education needs or other factors. Character development is central to ensuring that all students reach their potential. Positive learning environments encourage peer-to-peer support, mutual respect and inclusion, and the development of character attributes such as optimism and perseverance. Active student engagement within such learning environments will provide a strong foundation for the skills, knowledge and attitudes that all students, particularly those with special education needs, require to both succeed and excel in achieving their goals.

There is a growing body of research evidence that character development and greater student engagement in the life of the school are linked closely to academic achievement. In fact, Douglas Willms of New Brunswick's Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy advocates that "we need to consider student engagement as an important schooling outcome in its own right" (2002). A study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2003), which examined data from 42 nations, concluded that one in five students in Canada has a low sense of belonging at school. This results in lower academic achievement during the schooling years, and often leads to continued difficulty in adulthood.

Finding Common Ground: The Essential Components

The character development initiative recognizes that **academic achievement**, **character development**, **citizenship development** and **respect for diversity** are inextricably linked and must be interwoven into students' educational experiences. It provides students with tools for increasing academic achievement, building a solid foundation for thoughtful decision-making and creating more opportunities to use their skills to influence positive outcomes.

School communities must value differences in learning styles, student ways of knowing, and the contributions of all members of their learning community. This ensures the success of every student, regardless of ability, special education needs or other factors. Character development is central to ensuring that all students reach their potential. Positive learning environments encourage peer-to-peer support, mutual respect and inclusion, and the development of character attributes such as optimism and perseverance. Active student engagement within such learning environments will provide a strong foundation for the skills, knowledge and attitudes that all students, particularly those with special education needs, require to both succeed and excel in achieving their goals.

There is a growing body of research evidence that character development and greater student engagement in the life of the school are linked closely to academic achievement. In fact, Douglas Willms of New Brunswick's Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy advocates that "we need to consider student engagement as an important schooling outcome in its own right" (2002). A study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2003), which examined data from 42 nations, concluded that one in five students in Canada has a low sense of belonging at school. This results in lower academic achievement during the schooling years, and often leads to continued difficulty in adulthood.

The character development initiative is pivotal in creating and sustaining school environments characterized by high expectations for learning and high levels of student engagement. There are four pillars of the Student Success / Learning to 18 Initiative; the first three are literacy, numeracy and pathways. The 4th Pillar, Community, Culture and Caring, provides an essential avenue that leads to higher levels of student success. This pillar focuses on supporting school cultures that develop a sense of community and caring relationships to provide all students with greater opportunities to achieve success. The 4th Pillar, Community, Culture and Caring, connects students to school, supports relationships that will engage students, especially those who are disengaged from school, and promotes student mentoring and advocacy.

Character attributes such as honesty and integrity provide students with high standards for behaviour, for making decisions that are personally empowering and for creating quality relationships. This translates ethical knowledge, skills and attitudes into action.

Ontario's growing diversity provides our students with a rich opportunity to explore and develop the attitudes and the interpersonal and community-building skills that a mature democracy demands.

Today's students need to function effectively in our diverse society and in our global economy. With increasing ethnocultural and racial diversity the need to find common ground based on our values and beliefs, in communities and as a province, takes on greater significance. Building consensus on what we hold in common is essential for the development of peaceful communities and enduring relationships.

The character development initiative will provide a powerful means to facilitate student growth and development in the context of our diverse schools and communities. Character cannot be taught in the abstract, nor as a course of study. Students develop character through their interactions with others in their diverse classrooms and communities. Qualities such as empathy are best nurtured through relationships that cross the lines that often divide people in society.

We want our schools, our communities, our province, our nation and our world to embody the qualities of effective relationships. The character development initiative brings together the essential components that individuals and society need in order to achieve excellence in all facets of life.

Ultimately, we want our students to think critically, feel deeply and act wisely.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Academic achievement within a culture of high expectations for learning for all students, from all backgrounds and circumstances, remains the primary responsibility of schools. A number of research findings indicate that character development and the creation of caring and engaging school cultures have the potential to improve student achievement.

Expectations of students in our changing society include high levels of learning competencies. In addition, new competencies are required in areas such as environmental responsibility, global awareness, economic astuteness, social responsibility, technological proficiency and areas that help us cope with emerging opportunities and challenges. Learning to meet these critical expectations will prepare and empower our students to be full participants in their education and in their communities.

In an information-rich, knowledge-based society, ethical principles are needed to guide decision-making for the common good. Ontarians want our schools to prepare students for the responsibility that this entails.

High standards and high expectations are essential components of a quality education. There is also a world wide focus on higher levels of literacy. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) document entitled *Literacy as Freedom* (2006) states that:

> *"Literacy is one of the fundamental instruments of freedom. In today's world the use of written communication is embedded in socio-political and economic systems at local, national and global levels. It is part of the way institutions function and is a key to learning opportunities."*

Participation in today's democratic processes in all spheres of life in our schools, our communities, our province, our nation and, indeed, our world requires a growing complexity of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours.

The government has made improvement in publicly-funded education the centrepiece of its mandate. Its vision is of an education system that excels provincially, nationally and internationally. It also recognizes that education is about more than academics; education must develop the human qualities that create vibrant and inclusive communities.

Debates about the key purposes of education have persisted over the years. A variety of perspectives converge on the belief that schools serve multiple purposes, with academic achievement as a primary responsibility. Other purposes are shared among schools, all stakeholders and community members.

Engaging students as active participants in the learning process and providing relevant programs and supports are essential for academic achievement. Research tells us that when character development initiatives are implemented well they are multi-faceted in nature. Further, DeWit, McKee, Fjeld and Kariuja (2003), in their Ontario study of 22 schools, clearly establish the strong link between the quality of teacher-student relationships and academic achievement and behaviour. The social, emotional and academic aspects of classrooms have a direct impact on learning. Trust, a sense of belonging and active engagement create an environment that engenders success. This substantiates what all educators know – that student social and emotional engagement and academic success are intertwined. The common saying, "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care" speaks to the importance of the strong teacher-student relationships that underlie academic success.

Excellence in education includes character development.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable. They bind us together across socio-economic, racial, religious, cultural, gender and other lines that often divide people and communities. They form the basis for our relationships. They are a foundation for excellence in education and for our vision of strong, caring and interdependent communities.

Through character, we find common ground.

It is critical that the attributes that form the basis of character development initiatives are identified through a board process of consultation with diverse communities. Through this process, communities identify the qualities which schools should foster through systematic and intentional practices and processes.

Studies in character education have demonstrated that, when implemented on a school-wide basis, positive results and improvements are realized in the following areas:

- student engagement, motivation and achievement
- self-discipline, behaviour and interpersonal relationships
- preparation for the workplace
- school culture, civility and feelings of safety
- school community partnerships
- volunteerism and civic engagement.

Formal and informal character development initiatives currently exist in a variety of forms across Ontario. Many boards and schools have implemented character development as a key component of their priorities. Character development is clearly evident in initiatives that address areas such as respectful and accessible workplaces, environmental awareness and protection, local and global health initiatives, athletic codes of conduct, student-led conferences and student leadership development. A number of boards have also developed curriculum resource documents that explicitly link curriculum content and expectations across subject areas to character development.

French Language Education

In all French-language schools, civic engagement provides an important conduit for students to affirm, celebrate and enrich their Francophone culture and identity.

The government's Amenagement linguistique policy stresses the importance of:

- building students' leadership skills
- encouraging their involvement in cultural and intercultural activities
- initiating school-community projects that involve a cultural element
- integrating cultural experiences into the daily life of the classroom and school.

In addition, the policy highlights the value of creating meaningful networks among all partners in education, including students, schools and communities.

Catholic Education

English Catholic education is founded on the basis of inculcating Catholic values. Historically, Catholic education has stressed community involvement as an important means for students to put beliefs into practice. The Catholic School Graduate Expectations, developed by The Institute for Catholic Education (1998), describe the life roles, knowledge, skills and attitudes the Catholic community holds for its students. Catholic boards utilize the expectations in various ways: as overall expectations of staff, students and the system, as foundational expectations for curriculum and program development, and as goals for graduates. The Graduate Expectations reflect the journey of students through Catholic education, in partnership with home and parish, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into adulthood.

The Catholic school graduate is expected to be:

- a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living
- an effective communicator who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of gospel values
- a reflective, creative and holistic thinker who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good
- a self-directed, responsible, lifelong learner who develops and demonstrates his/her God-given potential
- a collaborative contributor who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good
- a caring family member who attends to family, school, parish and the wider community
- a responsible citizen who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice and the sacredness of human life

The mission statement for French-language Catholic schools adopted by the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB) was developed following a province-wide consultation with parents, teachers, secondary students, school administrators and school boards. The document, *L'école catholique de langue française* (2003), sets out a clear vision for French-language Catholic schools. The following examples, translated from the mission statement, complement the Character Development Initiative:

> *"A French-language Catholic school, like all schools, is an environment for learning. However, the evangelical values that are conveyed support intellectual rigour, hard work, personal discipline, critical thinking, creativity, co-operation, good judgment, a love of research and continuing education."* (p. 14)

> *"... every student who attends a French-language school will not only achieve freedom, thanks to the various kinds of knowledge provided in all learning environments, but also internal freedom, as they discover and express the faith that will enable them to find and affirm the sense of their existence and their place in the world."* (p. 15)

"A French-language Catholic school is aware of world events and sensitive to different cultural realities. It seeks through many means to establish a dialogue with the secular community of which it is a part and to establish partnerships with organizations in society such as commerce and industry. Its activities demonstrate a concern with global problems." (p. 16)

"We all agree that the best way to ensure that our distinctive Catholic culture permeates our schools and indeed our entire system is to focus our efforts on bringing the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations to life. These life roles, if realized in every classroom and supported by every educator, will ensure that our vision of Catholic education is realized – that our learners become fully alive human beings who help create a society that serves the common good, proclaims the message of God and transforms the world of everyday life!

The Catholic Character and Culture initiative brings an explicit focus on character development to our call to form our students in their faith and educate them to become citizens of the world who can transform it into a more just and loving society."

– Michael Schmitt
Director of Education, Lakeshore and Algonquin Catholic District School Board

Aboriginal Education

There are strong connections between existing character development programs and the teachings of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures. These teachings are known as the basic truths that interweave through life, which include respect, honesty, bravery, truth, wisdom and love.

An explicit focus on these and other teachings promotes harmony and enhances positive interactions in our schools and communities. When students learn about the traditions and beliefs of others in their school communities, they gain an understanding of and respect for differences. Aboriginal and local perspectives must be honoured in the development of implementation plans for the character development initiative.

In all Ontario publicly-funded boards – English, Catholic and French – character development addresses the whole student as an individual, as a learner and as an engaged citizen. It strives to prepare students for community and work with attributes that business and community leaders have identified as essential such as honesty and responsibility. It strives to create the relationships, experiences and culture in which all students can learn, thrive and succeed.

The Pivotal Role of School Staff

The quality of the relationships in schools is an integral factor in creating cultures that transform buildings into caring and engaging learning environments. Learning involves individuals other than teachers, students and administrators. All those with whom students interact contribute to their education. Volunteers, school-based social service workers, classroom and school support staff, and bus drivers – all those who work and volunteer in our schools are part of the wider learning curriculum. From a welcoming "good morning" to thoughtful individual support, to respectful listening and guidance in difficult situations – students learn powerful lessons about what it means to be caring adults of character from the adults around them.

Teachers play a key role in the character development of students. When students reflect upon their education they frequently identify a teacher as the single most important factor in their success in life. Exemplary teachers have always fostered positive attributes, explicitly and implicitly, in their classrooms. They model high expectations in academics and behaviour, develop relationship skills and attitudes, integrate qualities such as honesty and fairness into lessons, and organize their classrooms to reflect principles of inclusion and engagement. The relationships that teachers forge with students build school and classroom environments that support learning and character development.

Historically, Ontario teachers have included character development as an important part of the teaching and learning process.

In their 2004 research, Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson and Wahlstrom state that:

> *"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school."*

School leadership is instrumental in creating a culture and climate that supports student learning. The principal, along with staff, students and parents, establishes the expectations, practices and processes that define both the operations of the school and the quality of the relationships that create the sense of caring and belonging that students need to succeed.

School leaders inspire, articulate and set the example of the school's character vision. They are intentional in their pursuit of a learning environment that develops the whole person; they make the attributes explicit through action.

Good leaders have always worked with students, staff and parents to create trusting relationships that respect and encourage academic learning, character development and student engagement. They include the voices of all members of the diverse educational community.

The character development initiative supports student involvement in building and extending positive caring, school and community cultures. It recognizes the importance of mentoring relationships between students and caring adults. It aligns with curriculum at both the elementary and secondary levels, offering many opportunities for teachers to embed, integrate and include character attributes in the curriculum and in the culture of the school and community. Overall, it prepares students for citizenship and civic involvement and to be fully engaged, responsible members of their communities.

The Role of Trustees

Trustees play an important role in Ontario education. They represent democracy in action and are the eyes and ears of their communities. In our publicly-funded education system, trustees carry forward the hopes and aspirations that parents and communities have for their children and youth. They ensure that the education provided is of the highest quality and that the goals of the school board are comprehensive and inclusive. It is the role of trustees to translate parental and community expectations into a concrete plan of action for the students in their board.

Trustees play an essential role in the community engagement process. They exercise stewardship in ensuring that the key principles of character development outlined in this document are embedded in the strategies that they forge for their school boards.

"For students, the school environment is a precursor to the role they will fulfill in society. We need to develop students who care about one another, who respect the incredible gift of diversity and who want to contribute to make their schools better. The Ontario character development initiative is leading us in the right direction."

– Janet Wilkinson
Director of Education,
Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

CITIZENSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Citizenship development is a deliberate effort to nurture democratic ideals. It is an avenue through which students can further develop respect for self, others, property, the environment, diversity, human rights and other qualities upon which we find common ground as Canadians. It creates and expands opportunities for students to learn about, analyze, question, and contribute to, the building of their communities, our nation and the world.

In essence, it is about who students are as citizens, how they relate to others and how they contribute to their communities.

It is important that we engender the ideals of democratic citizenship in our students. Citizenship is a responsibility as well as a right. Rights include freedom to express beliefs and work and live in environments free from discriminatory practices. Along with these rights comes the responsibility to support democratic processes within our schools, our communities, our province and our nation. As citizens, we work hard to maintain and improve the educational, environmental, cultural, economic, political and social aspects of our society. Citizenship is a privilege that we must not take for granted.

Our public education system is committed to inspiring and engaging our students' idealism and enthusiasm in understanding, critically analyzing and practising the democratic processes. Through curriculum such as language, mathematics, social studies, The Arts, and more specifically, Grade 10 Civics and Canadian History, Grade 11 Law, and Grade 12 World Issues, students are learning positive and pro-social concepts of ideal citizenship. Through service learning, students have opportunities to experience both the need for and rewards of building community. Through increased participation in board and school committees and initiatives, students learn to share in constructive decision-making. Through leadership experiences, students act upon their principles and gain insights into how their decisions impact on the lives of others.

Ontario has a graduation requirement of 40 hours of community involvement activities. A large proportion of Ontario students exceed this expectation in their service to their communities. Their strong sense of volunteerism is nurtured through these activities.

Civic engagement is an important component of education for citizenship. It also provides opportunities to develop competencies and connectedness between our students and their schools and communities. Service learning provides safe environments to learn and practise the skills and knowledge required to take on greater opportunities and challenges in the future. It can also invoke in our students the joy of giving, sharing, building, and understanding themselves in the context of a caring society.

Increased opportunities for involvement in leadership in the classroom, in schools, in the board and in the community develop many of the skills required for positive and effective participation as citizens in schools and communities. In these contexts, the character development initiative challenges students to:

- make principled decisions
- think critically about their world
- anticipate problems and contribute to solutions
- develop higher levels of personal and social responsibility.

Developing an understanding of how organizations function, how decisions are made and the importance of casting one's vote are vital to students' education and to their future roles as engaged citizens.

Student leadership is not limited to the few; each and every student in our schools should have opportunities to be in positions where leadership is required. It may be through acts of courage such as letting the teacher know that bullying is occurring, or through acts of compassion such as taking the lead in educating other students about street children. It may be in group work and cooperative learning in the classroom, in making positive suggestions for improving the learning environment or in mediating a conflict. The exercising of student leadership also involves civic engagement, participation in decisions about their education and service learning. It is learning the skills of positive advocacy for themselves and for others.

Active student engagement in learning, in civic participation, in service to others and in leadership roles requires the development of knowledge, skills and character attributes. The research of Althof and Berkowitz (2006) affirms the interconnectedness of these elements. It states that ideas in this field converge on the notion that competent, engaged and effective citizenship is necessary for a full political, economic, social and cultural partnership. This requires a set of citizenship competencies that include:

- a strong knowledge of civics and governance
- critical-thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills
- communication, social and participatory skills
- an understanding of and commitment to character.

These strands of competent citizenship can be taught and practised in classrooms and in schools in partnerships with communities. This requires adult and student commitment to character building in all facets of learning.

Understanding their communities and how events and circumstances impact on people and environments gives students a window to the world. They need a continuum of opportunities to discover what it means to be a citizen. These range from recognizing the daily behaviours that make our world a better place, to taking responsibility for others in need, to exercising their right to vote, to taking action on issues of justice. Schools must take a leading role in citizenship development as students assume increasingly important responsibilities for the improvement of their communities.

"Character development has shaped who I am today. It's made me realize that my voice is important, that I need to be involved in what's happening and that I can make a difference."

– Kristen Duncan
Grade 12 student, Peel District School Board

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

The Character Development Initiative upholds and reinforces the rights and freedoms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which include justice, peace, language and religion. Through character development, students learn to respect others and their right to dignity. This respect is a fundamental human right of all people.

Respect for the dignity of all people is an essential characteristic of our Ontario society. This often leads to student leadership and involvement in social justice issues. Indeed, there are many examples of Ontario students who have made an impact on the world stage in areas such as child labour, health and environmental issues.

In the future, our citizenry will continue to be increasingly diverse. People come to Canada, and particularly our province, from across the globe. Ontarians represent the world in miniature. Their perspectives, cultures and world views enrich the fabric of our society. They also require us to find unity and a common bond within our diversity through the values we hold in common.

The Early School Leavers Report (2003) comes to the following conclusion:

> *"With our increasing diversity, there is a growing need to find common ground on the values we share. It is essential that issues of power, equity and social differences are properly addressed. The development of an inclusive school environment results in a process of schooling that is not only more relevant for social and minority youth, but enhances the overall scope of the entire curriculum for all students."*

In the early stages of their implementation of character initiatives, some Ontario school boards conducted consultations using inclusive processes to ensure that diverse perspectives were heard and included. These groups, from all walks of life, achieved consensus on the universal attributes for their character development initiatives.

The multiple perspectives that exist within our communities demonstrate the need for school boards to be increasingly responsive to the needs and aspirations of their diverse communities.

When character development includes a strong respect for diversity, students become attuned, not only to their own humanity, but also to that which they have in common with others.

"Curriculum is about more than literacy and numeracy; it's about addressing all the elements that inspire our students to learn and the many ways this happens. Character development plays a significant part. We need to recognize that character development is not an add-on – we're already doing it in so many ways. The challenge is to identify how we're doing it and to measure the impact of what we are doing. As educators, we all act with good intentions but we must ensure that the impact of our actions carries the weight of our intentions.

I'm excited that the Ministry is setting explicit character development expectations for all schools in Ontario."

– Yaw Obeng
Superintendent of Education,
Halton District School Board

Finding Common Ground: Parent and Community Partnerships

Parents and families have a primary responsibility for the development of their children's character, with the support of the community.

Community members and organizations, business, local government, and faith communities work collaboratively with schools to share this important responsibility. Character development is an integral part of many youth, sports and community-based programs. It is nurtured in cooperative education and work-experience programs that reflect the call from the business community for schools to develop well-rounded individuals capable of thriving in a global economy.

Partnerships must involve all members of school communities in creating cultures that reinforce the social and emotional knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that students require to become caring and socially responsible citizens.

Parents can support character development initiatives at all stages of their children's development, K–12, in a variety of ways such as:

- serving as positive role models at home, at school and in the community
- reading to and with their children, followed by reflective discussions about the characters in the stories and the values they demonstrate
- nurturing the development of qualities such as empathy and respect for others in interpersonal relationships
- talking with their children about character attributes and how they apply to situations at home and in the community
- teaching the skills children need to make sound decisions and to determine how their actions impact on others
- contributing to and supporting their children's school's character development initiative.

The community can also develop character initiatives in a variety of ways such as:

- forming partnerships with local schools
- implementing a character development initiative in their workplace
- providing youth with extracurricular and civic engagement opportunities
- contributing to and supporting the character development initiatives in their local schools.

When we work together, we build strong communities that support our shared goals for our children and youth.

"We need character development in our schools and in our businesses – what you do and what you say has to match. When our students develop strength of character they'll be able to reason out or talk to someone about whatever comes at them."

– Candace LaFrance
Parent, Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

Implementing Character Development

The Character Development Initiative was launched in October, 2006 at a provincial symposium attended by educators, students, parents, trustees and community members. Following the symposium, Character Development Resource Teams were established across the province to support school boards with their implementation planning. In the spring of 2007, consultation sessions were held across the province to share additional information about character development and gather input on the components of the initiative and on implementation plans. The input collected is reflected in this document.

The Ministry of Education expects that all publicly-funded school boards in Ontario will implement the Character Development Initiative during the 2007–08 school year.

Many school boards have already developed and implemented programs which address aspects of character development. For these boards, the initiative will provide an opportunity to add depth to existing programs, and to take academic achievement, character and citizenship development, and respect for diversity to new levels.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Curriculum documents for Ontario's public education system currently include expectations that are geared towards social, interpersonal and citizenship development. The civics, social studies and guidance programs are cases in point. The Kindergarten to Grade 12 document, *Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools* (1999), for example, emphasizes student development, interpersonal development and career development. The document states:

> *"Students will learn to demonstrate self-discipline, take responsibility for their own behaviour, acquire the knowledge and skills required for getting along with others both within and beyond school, and choose ways of interacting positively with others in a variety of situations. They will also learn about thoughtful and non-violent problem-resolution, social responsibility, working cooperatively with others and caring about others."*

Examples abound in other curriculum documents. All include expectations related to the responsibility of schools to develop positive character attributes as an integral part of students' education.

Ministry of Education: Implementation Support

The Provincial Character Development Resource Teams

Character Development Resource Teams have been established across the province to support all English, French and Catholic publicly-funded school boards. Team leaders are experienced in the implementation and extension of character development programs.

Online Resources

The document entitled *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12*, is located on the Ministry of Education website, www.edu.gov.on.ca. Character development information will be posted regularly on this site along with updates on the work and structure of the Character Development Resource Teams. Links to the character development webcasts and event highlights, such as the October 2006 Character Development Symposium, will also be provided.

Print and Other Resources

Over time, support documents such as *Character Development in Action: Successful Practices, K–12*, and research to support practice monographs, will be shared with educators and posted on the Ministry website. Educators will also be encouraged to share implementation and teaching strategies through their Resource Teams and Ministry contacts.

Ministry of Education: Key Actions To Date

- consulted with 26 selected boards to identify effective implementation practices and collect input regarding implementation requirements and challenges June 2006
- convened a Provincial Symposium to build awareness and common understanding of the key principles of the provincial character development initiative October 2006
- produced a webcast for the education sector to support the character development initiative December 2006
- established Character Development Resource Teams to share successful practices and provide leadership for school boards in implementing and extending their character development initiatives December 2006
- provided school boards with incentive funding and supports to initiate or expand upon their character development initiatives January 2007
- conducted 15 regional forums to engage parents, community and business organizations and the education sector in sharing responsibility for the initiative February through June 2007
- provided school boards with nine capacity building sessions for Board Character Teams, Student Achievement Officers and Student Success Leaders to enable them to provide support for schools as they initiate, or expand upon, their character development initiatives April through June 2007

Roles and Responsibilities

The following summarizes the roles the Ministry of Education, school boards, schools, teachers, all board and school staff and students will play in making this initiative a reality.

Ministry of Education

The ministry will:

- release the document entitled *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12* to provide direction for the initiative
- coordinate and provide leadership for the work of the Provincial Character Development Resource Teams
- provide school boards with start-up funding and supports to initiate or expand upon their character development initiatives
- produce resources, webcasts and examples of successful practices, to support implementation and extension of the initiative
- develop guidelines for data collection and analysis for determining the success of the initiative at the ministry, school board and school levels
- conduct research and monitor the effectiveness of the implementation and impact of the initiative.

School Boards

School boards will:

- collaborate with their Provincial Character Development Resource Team to develop the processes and practices necessary for successful implementation
- establish a collaborative board-based process for engaging students, staff, parents and school councils, as well as a diverse cross-section of business and community representatives, in the development, implementation and review of their initiative, with local trustees playing a key role
- ensure that students play a key role at all stages of the development of this initiative
- provide the knowledge, skills and leadership development required for students to take on their expanded roles effectively
- promote the character attributes agreed upon by the community in their workplace practices and interactions
- establish a culture of respect for diversity through policies, processes, practices, and interactions
- ensure that their character development initiative is aligned with and becomes an integral part of Board and School Improvement Plans
- provide a key role for school councils to play in reaching out to and engaging community members in this initiative
- expand access to, and opportunities for, student engagement in their learning environments
- expand access to, and opportunities for, civic engagement and citizenship development of all students
- partner with local organizations to provide programs which further engage students in the community.

School Principals

Principals will:

- model the character attributes agreed upon by the community in their workplace practices and interactions with others
- provide leadership in the implementation and development of the character development initiative in their school
- ensure that all members of the school community, students, teachers, parents and support staff, are engaged in school-wide implementation and development of the initiative
- ensure that student leadership reflects the diversity of the school population, and that students provide meaningful input into plans and decisions regarding the initiative
- ensure that there are opportunities to engage students in general, and disengaged and marginalized students in particular, in the initiative
- provide the knowledge, skills and leadership development required for students to take on their expanded roles effectively
- ensure that the character development initiative is aligned with and becomes an integral part of the School Improvement Plan
- provide professional learning opportunities for members of the school community in the area of character development
- ensure that character development is embedded in all subject areas and in all classrooms, extracurricular and school-wide programs
- expand access to, and opportunities for, student voice and engagement in their learning environments
- provide a key role for school councils to play in reaching out to and engaging community members in this initiative
- expand access to, and opportunities for, civic engagement and citizenship development of all students
- monitor and collect data on the effectiveness of the character development initiative.

"A culture of learning in a classroom is based on respect. Tolerance or acceptance of others is not enough. Respect involves all students – all that they are, have experienced, and have to offer – including those who challenge or disturb us and those from whom we learn. It starts with respectful and trusting relationships – we have to know what this looks like. We teach respect by modelling, this is the greatest of all lessons and it has to be in place before learning in areas such as literacy and numeracy can happen.

Character development needs to be part of everything we do. It has made me a more respectful person, a more respectful teacher. This is a wonderful journey that we're on together."

– Dan Celetti
Teacher, Algoma District School Board

Teachers

Teachers will:

- model the character attributes agreed upon by the board-based community consultation process in their workplace practices and interactions
- continue to engage students in the creation of a classroom learning environment that is collaborative, caring and characterized by high expectations for learning
- provide the knowledge, skills and leadership development required for students to take on their expanded roles effectively
- assist in creating a school culture that values caring relationships between teachers and students, fosters a sense of belonging, nurtures democratic principles and encourages student voice in decision making
- use the attributes identified in Ontario Curriculum and other ministry documents and by local communities in the development of classroom behavioural expectations in collaboration with students
- embed character development in their subject areas and in all classrooms, extracurricular and school-wide programs.

All Board and School Staff

All staff will:

- model the character attributes agreed upon by the community in their workplace practices and interactions
- assist in creating school and board cultures that value positive relationships and service excellence.

Students

Students will:

- provide meaningful input into plans and decisions for implementation of the character development initiative in their school
- include diverse members of their student population in the initiative
- take opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to expand their roles in their classrooms, schools, boards, and communities
- ensure that leadership development opportunities are available for all students
- create opportunities to engage students who are disengaged and who may feel marginalized
- demonstrate their concern for others by anticipating issues of social justice in their schools and local communities and contributing to their solutions
- identify additional opportunities for meaningful local community involvement, civic engagement and citizenship development.

Character in Action ...

"I noticed one of my friends without a lunch, and so I offered her half of mine so she wouldn't be hungry. One of my classmates was rough-housing in the classroom and started to pick on me, but instead of retaliating, I went up to him and asked him to stop. Also, a classmate looked troubled with her work, so I tried to help her understand how to do the assignment, and then she understood it and I felt happy."

– Theresa Tran
Grade 8 student,
Toronto Catholic District School Board

References

Althof, W., & Berkowitz, M. W. (2006, December). Moral education and character education: Their relationship and roles in citizenship education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 35(4), 495–518.

Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques. (2005). *Mission l'école catholique de langue française en Ontario*. Canada.

Conference Board of Canada. (2000). *Employability skills 2000+*. Ottawa, ON.

DeWit, D., McKee, C., Fjeld J., & Karioja, K. (2003, December). *The critical role of school culture in student success*. Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Evans M.A., Fox M., Cremaso L., McKinnon L. (2004). Beginning reading: The views of parents and teachers of young children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(1), 130–141.

Ferguson, B., Tilleczek, K., Boydell, K., & Rummens, J. A. (2005). *Early school leavers: Understanding the lived reality of student disengagement from secondary school*. Toronto, ON: Hospital for Sick Children.

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Goleman, D. (2006). *Social intelligence: The new science of human relationships* (2006). New York, NY: Bantam.

Goleman, D. (1996). Emotional intelligence. *Learning*, 24(6); 49–50.

Government of Ontario, Canada. (2007). *Ontario Skills Passport*. Retrieved October 26, 2007 http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/introduction.jsp?announcer=Home

Institute for Catholic Education. (1998). *Ontario Catholic school graduate expectations*. Toronto, ON.

Leithwood, K., Fullan, M., & Watson, N. (2003). *The schools we need: Recent education policy in Ontario & recommendations for moving forward*. Toronto, ON: OISE/UT.

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: Wallace Foundation.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2004). *Aménagement linguistique A policy for Ontario's French-Language schools and Francophone community*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (1999). *Choices into action: Guidance and career education program policy for Ontario elementary and secondary schools*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). *Ontario First Nation, Metis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2003). *Student engagement at school: A sense of belonging and participation*. Paris, FRA: OECD Programme for International Student Assessment.

Parker, J.D.A. (2003). *When "smart" students fail: Emotional intelligence and academic success*. Ottawa, ON: National Consultation on Career Development (NATCON).

Parker, J.D.A., Duffy J., Wood L.M., & Bond, B.J. (2004). *Emotional intelligence and achievement: A multi-site longitudinal study*. St. John's, NL: Canadian Psychological Association.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2006). *Literacy as freedom*. Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Willms, J. D. (2002). *Vulnerable children: Findings from Canada's national longitudinal survey of children and youth*. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.

Wright, J. (2003). *Ontario's first report on community character*. Toronto, ON: Ipsos-Reid.

Character Development in Ontario Schools

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes:

- provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable
- bind us together across socio-economic, racial, religious, cultural, gender and other lines that often divide people and communities
- form the basis for our relationships
- are the foundation for excellence in education
- are the foundation for our vision of strong, caring and interdependent communities.

Through character, we find common ground.

Printed on recycled paper

ISBN 978-1-4249-5052-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-4249-5287-8 (PDF)

© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2007